

A SOURCE BOOK OF THE
ARCHAEOLOGY OF ASSAM
AND
OTHER STATES OF
NORTH-EASTERN INDIA



KAMRUPA ANUSANDHANA SAMITI, GUWAHATI

About the book

This volume titled A SOURCE BOOK OF ARCHAEOLOGY OF ASSAM AND OTHER NORTH-EASTERN STATES consists of two parts and is a compilation of the reports published by the Archaeological Survey of India in its publications giving details of its yearly activities in Assam and other neighbouring States. Part I consists of the Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey. Part II consists of extracts called from Indian Archaeology - A Review. All illustrations published in the original reports are reproduced here. Most research scholars do not have access to the publications of the Archaeological Survey. This Volume will remove the difficulties faced by the scholars engaged in archaeological research in Assam and other States nearby.

Archaeologists, art historians, numismats and such like shall find this Volume of much help in their work.

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A SOURCE BOOK OF THE
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KAMRUPA ANUSANDHANA SAMITI, GUWAHATI

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PREFACE

Till not very long ago, Assam, and for that matter the whole of the North-Eastern region of India, was not properly known to the outside world. The fact that Assam has inherited a distinct cultural heritage - a unified culture of variegated hues - and her contribution to the growth and expansion of the culture and civilisation of India is by no means insignificant was not fully appreciated even by her own people. The most distressing aspect of the situation was that Assam was generally depicted outside as a land of witchcraft, blackmagic and secret practices - a thoroughly misconceived picture. Fortunately, to-day there is a marked change in the situation as, of course, it was bound to be. The credit for first attempts towards bringing to light the rich cultural traditions of Assam and unravelling its significant and glorious past must go to a number of well-meaning British civil and military officers aided by some local people whose enquiries yielded astounding results. The attention of the Indologists was gradually drawn to this part of the country as the hidden treasures of antiquities in the form of relics of ancient monuments, sculptures of fine workmanship, epigraphs, coins, hoards of manuscripts, etc. bearing on the culture and ancient civilisation that existed in Assam and her neighbourhood, started coming to light either by chance discoveries or by strenuous efforts of individual antiquarians.

The mantle of systematic investigation into Assam's ancient past, however, fell largely on the shoulders of the dedicated workers of the **Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti** (Assam Research Society) which was established in 1912 with a view to promoting research in and disseminating knowledge of history, archaeology, ethnography, language and literature, etc. of Assam and her neighbourhood. The establishment of this antiquarian research institute heralded an era of intense enthusiasm in the matter of inquiry into Assam's past, the researches of which were published in the pages of the **Journal of the Assam Research Society**, which commenced its publication in 1933. Establishment of a museum which ultimately developed into the Assam State Museum and publication of this journal are two significant achievements of the Samiti.

Recent decades have seen the growth of considerable interest in Assam and the other North-Eastern areas. The study of its history, culture and archaeology is also receiving greater attention from outside scholars. Opening of a full-fledged circle of the Archaeological Survey of India at Guwahati only a year ago is a result of this. The decision of the Indian Archaeological Society, the Indian History and Culture Society and the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies to hold their annual conferences (XVI, XI and VIII respectively) at Guwahati from 8th to 11th December, 1984 is clearly indicative of such welcome interest and awareness.

It is a pleasure and privilege for the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti to collaborate with the Directorate of Archaeology of Government of Assam in hosting the joint session of the above-mentioned Conferences. The Samiti also decided to bring out two publications which together could act as a standard reference books for researchers in the field of history and archaeology of the North-Eastern region. It was decided that one of the publications should be a compilation of select papers

and articles culled out from the pages of the journal of the Assam Research Society, some of which are not readily available to the research workers. As regards the other publication the Samiti considered it worthwhile to bring out a compilation of the reports of the Archaeological Survey of India on the work done by them in Assam and the neighbouring States. The present publication "A Source Book of Archaeology of Assam and other North-Eastern States" is being brought out as a result of this decision.

This compilation aims at acquainting the scholars as well as general readers with the archaeological discoveries and related work done in the North-Eastern region. Accordingly, in addition to the reports published by the Archaeological Survey of India a brief review of the work done by the Department of Archaeology, Govt. of Assam and a list of Protected Monuments in Assam (both under the Central and the State legislations) have been included in this volume. We intended to include similar reports in respect of the other States and Union Territories in the North-East but on account of extreme shortage of time we could not do so. We are, therefore, aware of the rather incomprehensive character of this publication and that is why we have named it as "A Source Book" and not "The Source Book". Even in its present form, it is hoped, the book will be found useful by the research workers and others interested in the archaeology of the North-Eastern India.

The press copies of the book had to be made partly at Guwahati and partly at Delhi at a very short notice. On account of extreme shortage of time certain printing errors have crept in this volume. We crave the indulgence of the learned readers for the errors of omission and commission, of printing or otherwise, that may have crept in this book in spite of our best efforts.

The Samiti would like to express its sincere gratitude to the State Government for placing at its disposal the necessary funds to meet the cost of printing of this compilation and in this respect it is particularly thankful to Shri A. Bhattacharjya, I.A.S., Commissioner and Secretary, Deptt. of Education, Govt. of Assam who took keen interest in the matter. We are equally grateful to the chief host of the above mentioned Conferences; Dr. R.D. Choudhury, Director of Museums, Assam and Shri G. N. Bhuyan, Director of Archaeology, Assam for their unceasing help in various matters relating to publication of this volume. Our sincere thanks are also due to Dr. B.S. Raman, Superintending Archaeologist, A.S.I., North-Eastern Circle, Guwahati and the authorities of the Guwahati University library for kindly supplying valuable documents for preparation of this volume.

The Samiti expresses its sincere thanks to Shri C.D. Tripathi, I.A.S., a member of the Governing Body of the Samiti and Dr. S.P. Gupta, Keeper, National Museum, New Delhi for taking upon themselves the responsibility for editorial work at Delhi and seeing it through the print at such a short notice. Our thanks are also due to Shri M.C. Joshi and Shri K.N. Dikshit, Directors in the Archaeological Survey of India for providing valuable assistance at Delhi. We would also record our thanks to Shri K.K. Sharma and Shri S. Ganesh Rao, both of the Archaeological Survey of India, but for whose pains taking labour Shri Tripathi and Dr. Gupta would have found it very difficult to have the printing completed in time. Last but not the least we thank York Printers, New Delhi who printed the volume in a matter of just a few weeks.

Guwahati
15 Nov. 1984.

D. Chutia
Secretary
Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA
ANNUAL REPORT 1906-7

CONSERVATION

T. Bloch

Of all the countries in India, to which the civilisation of the Aryans gradually extended, Assam seems to have been one of the last. If in the famous story of the **Satapatha-Brahmana**, **Agni Vaisvanara**, the personification of Brahmanical culture, in the course of his progress towards the east, made halt at the frontier of Magadha, or Bihar, it probably took him another thousand years before he could cross the frontier of Assam. Even the ancient name of Assam, or rather of the western part of it, **Pragjyotisa**, implies the notion of its having been looked upon in antiquity as the "benighted province" of India, a sort of dark continent; for the name evidently means "that which lies to the East of the light," a country, where the sun never sets, because he never rises there.

The introduction of Aryan civilisation into Assam is attributed to **Krisna**. As in Magadha he overthrew the barbarian rule of **Jarasantha**, so, in his progress towards the rising sun, he defeated **Naraka**, the King of **Pragjyotisa**, and restored to **Aditi**, the goddess of the earth, her ear-rings, which had been stolen by **Naraka** (1). The name **Naraka** itself, a diminutive form of **nara**, 'as man,' seems to imply a notion of contempt, and the crime, with which he stands charged, viz., the theft of the ear-rings of **Aditi**, the earth-goddess, might be expressed in the dry matter-of-fact language of modern days, by saying that his very existence was looked upon as a disgrace to civilisation. For to an Indian woman her ornaments form part of her personal honour, and it is only when she becomes a widow, or otherwise disgraced, that she is not allowed to wear them in public.

The course of Aryan civilisation in its progress to-wards Assam naturally followed the valley of the Brahmaputra. It is here that we meet with the first Aryan settlements. However, owing to the unfavourable conditions of the climate of Assam, with its torrents of rain and perpetual recurrences of seismic disturbances, it cannot surprise us in the least to find scarcely any ancient buildings left to us, of the time previous to the conquest of Assam by the Ahom kings, towards the end of the seventeenth century A.D. The modern civil stations of Gauhati and Tezpur seem to occupy the sites of two of the oldest and most important among the early Aryan settlements in Assam, called **Pragjyotisapura** and **Harappesvara** in Sanskrit. Like the modern Champañagar, the site of **Champa**, the ancient capital of the kingdom of the **Angas**, west of Bhagalpur in Bengal, both Gauhati and Tezpur have been built upon a sort of artificial plateau, raised by the underlying debris of the ancient settlements.

1 See Nowgong copper-plate of Balavarman, 1.4:F. A.S.B., Vol. LXVI, Part 1, 1897, p. 289; also Bargaon plate of Ratnapala, 11.6-8: 1.c., Vol. LXVII, part 1, 1898, p. 107.

A great number of mediaeval Indian carvings, brought to light during modern building operations, bear ample evidence of this fact. In regard to Tezpur, it seems worth mentioning here a discovery made a short time ago, towards the end of 1905, and reported by Mr. F.J. Monahan, I.C.S., in a letter dated the 18th January, 1906. Mr. Monahan writes as follows :-

"On digging for foundation, for the additions, which are being made to the Deputy Commissioner's office at Tezpur, the builders came upon a layer of hewn blocks of granite, underlying the present building. Some of the blocks, which have been dug up, are elaborately sculptured, as cornices, bases, or capitals of columns, etc., like the pieces, which one sees lying here and there, on and around the Tezpur **maidan**. There seems to be every probability, that the extent of the underground layer of hewn stone may be not less than that of the **cutchery** site; it may, of course, be much greater. The layer of stones is also, apparently, of considerable depth. I saw a hole, about 4 feet deep, opened by the removal of some of the granite blocks, below which there were more stones, apparently of the same kind. These remains point to the existence of a great building, of massive and ornate architecture on the Tezpur **maidan** site. There are ruins of a similar building on the **Bamani** Hill, two miles east of Tezpur. The top of this hill is a mass of granite blocks, many of them most curiously carved, and piled one on the other to an unknown depth."

The ruins on the **Bamani** Hill near Tezpur, referred to at the end of this extract, evidently belonged to some Hindu temple of considerable size, and the remains, found below the modern **cutchery** building, seemingly formed part of a similar structure. So far as one may judge from the carving above ground, both at Tezpur and at Gauhati, the entire absence of anything Buddhist among them is remarkable. The mild religion of Buddha probably never ventured to force its way into the wilderness of Assam, and we may well understand, why it was that the cult of such blood-thirsty goddesses as **Kali**, called **Kamakhya** (1) at her principal shrine near Gauhati, has been able to take such deep root in the mind of the indigenous population of the Brahmaputra valley, after it had been wielded into that heterogeneous conglomeration of various races and creeds, which we now call "Hinduism."

The climatic conditions of Assam, alluded to above, also explain why this province forms a comparatively easy charge, so far as conservation work is concerned. The ancient cities, buried under the modern stations of Tezpur and Gauhati, unfortunately, cannot be unearthed again, and among the many temples, dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries A.D., which still remain preserved to us, there are but few, that either require or justify any extensive scheme of conservation work. On the other hand, it is a matter of some satisfaction, that, in certain outlying places of Assam, a number of remains are to be found, still fairly well preserved and forming, as it were, quite a separate group of antiquities, almost original in many respects and distinguished from anything seen in other provinces of India

It is to this latter class of antiquities that conservation work in Assam has

1 This name appears to be a corruption from Sanskrit Kamaksi, due to the Assamese pronunciation.

been almost exclusively directed. Some of these, in fact, are so much hidden away inside an impenetrable jungle, that one does not feel justified in recommending their preservation to Government. For, apart from the cost of getting up labour, they are never likely to be visited by anyone, with the exception, perhaps, of a few isolated sportsmen, who may chance to come upon these remnants of bygone civilization. However, the recent opening up of the province by railways has helped to bring some of the more important ancient monuments of Assam into closer and more convenient reach for anyone interested in them. I refer especially to the remains of the ancient city of **Dimapur**, doubtless the most curious group of ruins in Assam, which now lie within easy reach from the Assam-Bengal Railway, less than a mile distant from the Manipur Road Station on that line.

The modern name **Dimapur**, meaning "the city on the **Dima**," seems to have been derived from the river, now called Dhunsiri, close to it.(1) The flourishing time of the place seems to have been the fifteenth century A.D., for, according to Gait, (2) the **Kacharis** deserted their capital at **Dimapur** after its invasion by the Ahoms, in 1536 A.D., and established a new capital at Maibong.(3) The style of the gateway in the eastern wall of the ancient city of **Dimapur** points to the same period; (4) for in its carved battlement, its narrow, pointed arch over the entrance, and its clumsy, octagonal corner turrets, it exhibits all the characteristic elements of that style of Muhammadan brick architecture in Bengal, which flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D., during the period of independence, and died out soon after Bengal had been annexed to the Mughal Empire by Akbar.

The total length of the city wall, which appears to consist of earth, raised upon an underlying brick structure, has not been measured by me; however, from Major Godwin-Austen's plan,(5) I make it to be 4,250 yards, or about 2.4 miles, in circuit, including the broken portion along the Dhunsiri river. The principal remains

1 See Gait, **A History of Assam**, Calcutta, 1906, p. 89, Note. Dima is explained as a **Kachari** word, meaning 'any large collection of water,' from **di** 'water,' and **ma** 'great.' The Ahoms called **Dimapur** 'the brick city,' : che-din-che-pen, literally 'city-earth-burn-make.'

2 I.c., p. 24.

3 Remains of this second capital of the **Kachari** kings still exist close to the Railway Station of Maibong, on the Assam-Bengal line. The most interesting among these remains is a small rock-cut temple, in the shape of a Bengali house, with a curved roof. It bears an inscription, dated the 5th in the Saka year 1643 (end of 1721 A.D.), and referring to a king **Hariscandra Narayana**, the Lord of **Hidimba**, perhaps **Kachar**.


4 A lithograph of it has been published by Major H.H. Godwin-Austen, along with his note on the Ruins at Dimapur, F.A.S.B., Vol. XLIII, 1874, Part 1, Plate IV.

5 Loc. cit., Plate 1.

stand close to the gate, in the eastern part of the city. They consist of two groups of stone pillars, running parallel to each other from north to south. Each of those two groups is, again, divided into two rows of pillars. The pillars in the first two rows, nearest to the gate, will be referred to in the following pages as "**Chessman-columns**," a name given to them by Major Godwin-Austen on account of their shape, which somewhat resembles that of chessman-figures. This will best be seen on Fig. 1; also on Plate V.

Major Godwin-Austen, likewise, is responsible for the name of "**V-shaped columns**" for the bifurcating stone pillars, which make up the third and fourth rows from the entrance to **Dimapur** city. Unfortunately, very few of them are at present erect, and none of them could be shown in its unbroken condition in any of the illustrations accompanying this article; however, one-half of a V-column may be seen on Plate VI (a). A peculiarity, that should be noted at once, is, that the upper ends of the two stone beams, making up the V, have one mortise hole each, as if they had been intended to receive some other structure, raised over them. The ornamentation on the chessman-columns is entirely floral or geometrical, and remarkable for the absence of any animal figures whatever, sometimes the ornamental bands, hanging down the columns, have swords or daggers carved upon them. The most striking feature, however, apart from the hemispherical capital, is the band, tied around the neck of the column, plainly visible in Fig. 1.

On the V-columns, animal designs are frequently met with between the three rosettes, which divide each half of the V into two separate fields of ornamentation. Thus, we find on the broken half, shown in Plate VI (a), below two figures of birds, perhaps peacocks, the well-known Indian design of a tiger overpowering an elephant. The design is purely conventional and, to add to its strange appearance, the sculpture in some cases provided it with horns, as on the stone shown in Plate VI (a), almost as if he had thought of fabulous monsters, such as the unicorn, of which, of course, we can hardly expect him to have had any knowledge.

A third type of stone monument, found at **Dimapur**, will be seen in Plate VI (b). It differs from the V-columns only in so far as the two bifurcating stone beams have been slightly curved, so as to resemble in shape somewhat the horns of a buffalo; thus :-  As will be seen later on, this form is probably more than a mere conventionality, and the name, "buffalo-horn columns" accordingly seems to be suited for them. Here, again, not a single column is now erect, and any illustration, accordingly, can only give an approximate idea of the original shape of these curious monuments. Their ornamentation is remarkable for the groups of three rosettes, shown on Plate VI (b). A dagger or sword, and a few animal figures are generally placed between the triangular bands, which develop, as it were, out of the three spirals that encircle the rosettes on the upper end.

The broken and dilapidated state of most of the monuments inside the ancient city of **Dimapur**, will be seen clearly enough from the illustrations published with this article. Fig. 2 affords a good illustration of their present condition. It was of course out of the question to attempt anything like a complete restoration of any of those various groups of stone monuments. Actually in the two rows of chessman-

columns, it was possible to save 13, out of 16, and 15 out of 17, while in the following two rows of V-column 5 out of 15 and one out of 17 were capable of being set up again. But to lift and replace broken stones, weighing several tons, requires heavy and costly plant and machinery, and the programme of conservation work at Dimapur, has, accordingly, been limited to restoring one or two specimens of each group only, to show what the remainder were like. The permanent upkeep of the restored monuments, moreover, entails a continuous struggle against the luxuriant growth of an Assam jungle, which one might almost call a primeval forest, but for the fact that we often know its growth to date from a period of less than a hundred years. So far, however, as it has been possible to ascertain definitely about the existence of remains, it appears that the monuments already known to us represent all the antiquities, hidden inside the Dimapur jungle, at least I am informed that a careful search of the remaining area inside the city walls, made with the promise of small pecuniary rewards for any discoveries, has ended without any result whatever.

Before entering in to the question of the signification and date of the pillars at Dimapur, it seems worth our while to mention briefly a group of similar remains at **Kasomari Pathar**, close to the Doyang river, about one day's journey off Jamuguri Station, on the Assam-Bengal Railway.

Their discovery appears to be due to the local Forest Officer. The place is very secluded, that it will scarcely be visited by any other official in the course of his tours of inspection, and even at Jamuguri, before starting on my boat Journey, I was advised to employ a special guide, who had visited the site on a previous occasion, as my boatmen professed complete ignorance of the locality.

As in **Dimapur**, the remains here also are found within the area of an old city. The earthen ramparts and moats are still visible, and inside are several mounds of earth, which may contain the remains of some buildings. The monoliths belong to the northern section of the town. First, there is an isolated chessman-column 9' high, with a circumference of 2' 6" at its base. It is identical in style with the **Dimapur** chessman-pillars (Fig. 3). Their hemispherical capital has a number of garlands falling down from its top. Among the carved emblems we again meet with the figure of a sword or dagger, similar to that now used by the Nagas and other wild tribes of Assam. At a distance of 55' from this column is a double row of stones - 24 altogether. It looks as if each line consisted of 12 stones, but the ruinous state of the place and the thick jungle made it impossible to take accurate measurements. The distance between the stones was about 10'. Here, again, the two lines run from north to south. The stones in the western line appear to have been larger than in the eastern line. There are also some indications of the height of the stones gradually decreasing from the centre towards each side, as in the **Dimapur** pillars. My measurements of four stones recorded the following heights: 6'5"; 8'; 9'4"; 8'6". The position of these stones is such that the first, or lowest, stands near the northern end, the third, or highest, almost in the centre, while the remaining two are more or less close to it. The average breadth is 2'6" in circumference.

Only four out of the two dozen of stones, still erect. The remaining stones, all lie prostrate on the ground, some broken and some complete, some upside down, and others with their carved faces turned upwards. It was impossible to photograph any of the fallen stones, but the three specimens shown on Plate VII will supply a general idea as to what these stones looked like. Only one side is carved. Its pointed shape, narrowing a little towards the base, somewhat resembles the blade of a sword or dagger. Perhaps the name 'sword-blade' or 'dagger-columns' would be appropriate for them, to distinguish them from the chessman and V-columns. The base has a horizontal band of ornaments. The panel below it has some animal figures -- elephants or lions -- carved upon it on some of the stones. From the horizontal bands rise generally two, but in a few instances only one pair of projecting bands, which at the end develop into a circle, filled up with rosettes and similar designs. The irregular triangle, which is formed by the two curves nearing each other towards the top, is either left empty, or has a sword or some other emblem carved upon it. The top is filled with a heart-shaped panel, containing various patterns of ornamentation. At the north-eastern end of the group stands a small square pillar, 3'-8-1/2" high and 1'-4" broad. It has a hollow in the top, 7-1/2" square.

From the very outset, there can be no room left for doubting the intimate connection of the **Kasomari Pathar** columns with those at **Dimapur**. So far as their ornamentation is concerned, there is very little that connects them with the ordinary class of Northern Indian works of art. In studying the designs exhibited on those columns, one certainly feels a slight touch of mediaeval Northern Indian Art here and there, e.g., in the rosettes so common on the pillars, and especially in animal groups, such as the lion rampant, over an elephant, to which allusion has been made above. But, in as much as the general shape of those columns, including the patterns of ornamentation employed in their carvings, bear such a marked un-Indian appearance, the suggestion offers itself that the people, to whom we owe their erection, came from a foreign, non-Aryan stock, and that we have to look into the religious or social customs of the many aboriginal tribes inhabiting the Assam border-lands, in order to grasp the true meaning of these curious stone monuments. Fortunately enough, a certain amount of evidence has recently been brought to light, which helps us a great deal further in this direction.

It has already been variously suggested, that the columns at **Dimapur** were memorial stones, put up in honour of some great man or event, or commemorating some meritorious act, such as the killing of a **mithun**, or bison, or the feasting of a village. This suggestion was first brought to my notice by Mr. B.C. Allan, I.C.S., sometime Superintendent of Gazetteer Revision in Assam. Later on, I found it expounded in an interesting report by Mr. Mitchell, Executive Engineer, Naga Hills Division. The custom, I understand, is still in vogue among the Naga tribes, who put up in their villages single blocks of stone, or bifurcated wooden posts, as memorial tokens of their national heroes, and of events like those mentioned above. The shape of one class of bifurcated columns which I proposed to call "buffalo-horn, columns", fits remarkably well with this theory. For we may well understand their form to have grown out of the custom of putting up the horns

of the slaughtered buffalo as an offering to the deity. Later on, when the barbarous hill-tribes of Assam took to a more sumptuous style of living, this old national custom used to be continued by setting up stone memorials, imitating the shape of the buffalo-horns, but of much larger size, and covered with elaborate and delicate carvings.(1)

Some modern analogies to this custom, which are still found in some of the Naga villages, have been observed by Mr. (now Sir Bampfylde) Fuller, the late Chief Commissioner of Assam. His interesting note on them is as follows:-

"The Chief Commissioner has recently visited the ruins of **Dimapur** after having marched through the Naga Hills, and has been struck with several points of similarity between the V-shaped pillars and the memorials used by the Naga tribes to commemorate sacrifices. Mr. Fuller found in Sema villages wooden 'shields' cut out in the shape of the letter U, standing 7 or 8 feet, high and covered with rough carving, amongst which were symbols of the Sun, of the Moon, and of Lightning. He noticed that these shields all faced the east, and was told on enquiry that for some reason now unknown they were all turned to the rising Sun. In general shape as well as in being definitely orientated, they were not very unlike the V-shaped stones recently discovered at **Dimapur**. The Rengma Nagas use rows of stones, of gradually decreasing size. The Chief Commissioner noticed in the Garo Hills wooden pillars, set up before houses in memory of dead relations, which are something like the 'chessman' shape."

There are, of course, and ever will be, a number of more or less curious stories current in Assam about those interesting monuments. Thus, we are told that the chessman-pillars at **Dimapur** each marked the appointed seat of some grandee, or the place where criminals used to be executed, leaving aside the common belief, that they indicate the sites of buried treasure. Unfortunately, history is reticent about them, and they do not offer us any definite clue in the shape of inscriptions, that might help us a little further. We must, therefore, for the present remain satisfied with the information collected above, and it seems very doubtful, indeed, if future discoveries will enable us to speak of them in terms more definite than those in which I have described them here.

I cannot, however, conclude this article, without noticing briefly another group of interesting remains in Assam, which I visited early in 1905, at the express wish of Sir Bampfylde Fuller. I refer to the so-called "Copper Temple," near the ancient city of **Bhismaknagar**, at Kundilnagar, (1) from four to five days journey by boat and elephant to the east of Sadiya. The temple itself has become famous owing to the fact that almost down to the memory of the present generation,

1 No remains are known to exist at **Bhismaknagar**, which lies a short distance off Kundilnagar. Its eastern walls have been followed by me on an elephant for about two miles. Before attempting to clear this large area, some definite information in regard to any possible remains seems to be called for. Historically both places are closely connected.

human sacrifices (2) have been offered there to some form of **Durga**, evidently worshipped under the name of **Tamresvari**. (3) This name, probably, originally meant simply "the **Isvari**, or **Durga**, put by **Tamra**."

It is, of course, impossible to say, who this person, called **Tamra**, may have been; however, it seems worth mentioning, that in the **Bhagavata Purana**, 10,59, 12 - I quote from **Bohtlingk** and Roth's Sanskrit Dictionary - **Tamra** is the name of one of the sons of Naraka, the famous mythical king of **Pragjyotisa**, to whom allusion has been made in the beginning of this article. This explanation of the word **Tamresvari**, at the same time, helps us to a proper understanding of the modern English name, "**Copper Temple**," for **tamra**, as is well known, means "copper" in Sanskrit, and the legend of the temple originally having been covered with copper, almost certainly sprang out of a misunderstanding of the word **Tamresvari**, the name of the goddess worshipped inside the temple. It is needless to say that no copper has been left anywhere close to the temple, and the clamps holding the stones together are all of iron.

2 See F.A.S.B., LXVII, 1898, Part III, p. 58. We meet with another, interesting reference to human sacrifices, offered to 'Siva at Girivraja, or **Rajgir**, by king **Jarasandha**. The passage is found in the **Maha-Bharata, Sabhaparvan**, 21, v. 16. Here we read of a flesh-eating bullock killed by Brhadratha : **yatra mamsadam rsabham asasada Brhadrathah ; tam hatva**, etc. What is meant by this curious tale becomes evident later on, when (22, v. 11) we read that Krsna blames **Jarasandha** for having offered human sacrifices to **Siva** :-

Manusyanam samalambho na ca drstah kadacana ; sa katham manusair devam yastum icchasi Sankaram ?

This very curious verse, like a similar one just before, v. 9, thus shows that **Jarasandha** was believed to have offered human sacrifices to **Siva**, whose image was represented under the form of a bull. In regard to Sadiya, I understand, that the reason, why no tea-gardens are allowed to settle inside the neutral zone, north of the Brahmaputra, near Sadiya, is the fear, that some of the wild hill tribes, like the Abors or Mishmis, might carry off some of the tea-garden coolies into slavery. However, they might do so for the purpose of selling those unfortunate coolies as slaves, but hardly with the object of sacrificing them to one of their deities.

3 Very often the first part of similar compound-names of Indian deities contains the proper name of the person who put up that particular image. Thus, to mention one single instance instead of many, at Belzmla, in the Rajshahi District of Eastern Bengal, are two **lingas**, one called **Gopesvara**, and the other **Kantesvara**. Now, as we know that each of them has been put up, only a couple of hundred years ago, by a person called **Gopikanta**, it is evident that each word has been formed with one of the two parts of **Gopikanta's** and we must accordingly translate both words alike, as "the **linga**, put up by **Gopikanta**."

As will be seen from the two illustrations in Figs. 4 and 5, the Copper Temple is far beyond any possible repairs. It must have been a small shrine only, and from its position in a remote corner of the area marking the site of the old city of **Kundilnagar**, we should hardly be justified in looking upon it as a very important sanctuary; perhaps it was nothing more than a small family chapel, used by the ancient rulers of **Bhismaknagar** for their private devotion. As will be seen from the illustration of the ruined gateway of the temple in Fig. 5, one of the jambs had carved upon it an image of **Siva** who acted here as a **dvarapala**- or guardian of the temple.

Far more interesting than this small temple, were a number of carved tiles, which were fixed into all the inner sides of the city wall, except the eastern one. The number found by me amounted to sixteen, of which twelve were still **in situ**, the balance being recovered from the debris and mud in front of the wall. Could I have devoted more than a few hours to this digging, -- which, by the way, had to be done with implements prepared from wood, -- I have no doubt but that it would have been possible to recover some more tiles from the debris. However, they probably would have been found in small fragments only, like some of those dug out by me, and moreover, it was absolutely out of the question to camp anywhere in the jungle, except on the bed of the river, which was a good distance off the Copper Temple and the ancient city of **Bhismaknagar**.

Nine of the best specimens of tiles are shown on Plate VIII. Generally speaking, the carvings represent figures of men, animals, birds, flowers and geometrical patterns, evidently without and symbolical meaning attached to them, whether religious or otherwise. The style is of the semi-barbarian kind, as in the carvings at **Dimapur** and other places in Assam. An instances of this, I may refer to the figure of a tiger or lion (Plate VIII, 5), which is very similar in treatment to the figure of a lion mounting on an elephant, seen on the broken V-columns from **Dimapur**. The type, of course, is Indian and only too common in mediaeval Indian Art, but the design, especially of the mane and tail, in the Assam figures, is peculiar. The peacocks, of which two are represented on another tile (Plate VIII, 4), with their bodies twisted around each other, are also a favourite device on the **Dimapur** columns; and the ornamental pattern of the tile No. 7 in the following list, occurs again on some of the V-columns in the newly-discovered third group of pillars at **Dimapur**. The following is a descriptive list of the carvings represented on the tiles :-

(1) bearded man, dancing, holding staff in right hand, and unknown object in uplifted left hand, see Plate VIII, 1;

(2) beardless man, with conical cap, running, holding spear in right hand; dagger fastened to left side of girdle; see Plat VIII, 2;

(3) pair of dancers; their uplifted right hands hold some sort of musical instrument (?); the left hands, holding a stick, rest on the hip; perforated ears; eyes and mouths wide open; snub noses; and hair arranged in strands ending in spirals; see Pláté VIII, 3;

- (4) two peacocks, with their bodies twisted around each other; small tree or flower on each side; see Plate VIII, 4;
- (5) lion or tiger, standing against tree, with forelegs uplifted; tongue protruding from mouth; tail ending in a cluster of five bunches of hair; see Plate VIII, 5;
- (6) horse, with saddle and bridle; see Plate VIII, 6;
- (7) circle, formed by two lines, with dots between; inside ornament, formed by twisting a rope or cord into four larger and many smaller irregular circles of ellipses;
- (8) plant, with five long, pointed leaves;
- (9) two squares, laid crosswise into each other; corners filled with ornamental sprigs; in inner square, ornamental flower, with four small and four large petals;
- (10) group of four flowers; the largest one is cup-shaped, with four leaves or petals on each side; two small flowers below, and a bud, rising over largest flower;
- (11) lotus-shaped ornament, with eight petals arranged around circle in centre, having cluster of nine drops; see Plate VIII, 7;
- (12) falcon carrying heron; see Plate VIII, 8;
- (13) dancing figure; right hand uplifted, left hand resting on hip; head resembles those of dancers on tile No. 3; broken; see Plate VIII, 9;
- (14) five fragments, making up half the original tile, which evidently had a bird, resembling a cock, as ornament;
- (15) fabulous bird, with pointed crest; I am unable to suggest what kind of bird this is; two pieces; corner missing;
- (16) three pieces; lotus-shaped ornament, similar to that in tile No. 11; inside, circle formed by two lines.

It seems impossible at present to offer any suggestion as to the age of the remains to which these curious tiles belong. We are left in complete ignorance about the period when the ancient city of **Bhismaknagar** was inhabited, and about the nation or tribe who used it as the seat of their government. I may notice, however, another fact, which confirms me in the opinion that the country east of Sadiya, was at a former time better known to, and in closer touch with, the Aryan population of Northern India than at present. When I travelled up the river

from Sadiya to **Bhismaknagar**, I met with numbers of Panjabis going in the same direction. Panjabi milkmen were selling milk to their countrymen all along the river bed, and small marts had been established at various places where I halted. On enquiry, I was informed that somewhere in that direction is a locality, called **Parasurame-svara-tirtha**. It was described to me as a sort of waterfall, formed by one of the many arms of the river up there, perhaps something like the "**Hardvar** of the Brahmaputra," where that river turns down to the plains. The knowledge of this secluded spot, coupled with the fact that it annually attracts a number of pilgrims from such remote distances as the Punjab, certainly goes to show that, one time, the country east of Sadiya was not, as at present, so very much out of the reach of civilisation, and it seems natural to surmise that the establishment of **Parasuramesvara** as a regular place of pilgrimage, a sacred **tirtha** to the Hindus, dates from a time when the ancient city of **Bhismaknagar** was inhabited, and formed, perhaps, the seat of the Governor of one of the frontier provinces of Assam the **Koitapal** of the Kingdom of **Pragjyotisa**, as his title then may have been.



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